

# SCHOOL BUS REFURBISHMENT PROGRAM

## PROGRAM BACKGROUND



With 80% of Maine students riding the school bus, the refurbishment program has the potential to effect many students as well as help school districts supplement the cost of bus maintenance. Refurbishing programs extend the usable life of a school bus while preserving safe reliable transportation for students.

School bus refurbishment programs have been used in states that include: Georgia, Illinois, Ohio, Texas, and more.

In New England, providing safe reliable student transportation means dealing with a diverse range of road conditions, road anti-icing techniques, bus trip distance, and student locations. Road conditions include snow, ice, pot holes, and low and high

temperature variances.

In Maine, additionally, anti-icing techniques cause corrosion on metals which damage the body, brake lines and electrical components of buses. Daily bus trips may be longer in rural areas and shorter in cities depending on whether the district uses a single or multi-bus route system. The longer distances in rural areas increase mileage. These extended daily bus routes may include travel on dirt roads. Road conditions increase body wear, structural damage and maintenance. In sum, road conditions and trip distance in Maine contribute to increased maintenance which shortens the life of the bus body.

In Maine school districts, trans-

portation staff report that the body and structure of school buses are failing before the mechanical systems fail. In general, the bus body fails seven years before the mechanical systems. Bus refurbishment extends the life of the bus body to have about the same life expectancy as the bus engine. It also prepares the bus to pass vehicle inspections. The School Bus Refurbishment Program was developed in response to these needs at the district level.

The School Bus Refurbishment Program is a new resource for school districts to receive subsidy. The program supports safe and reliable student transportation for all students who ride the bus.

## STATE LAW

The School Bus Refurbishment Program was initiated by gubernatorial executive order #24 FY11/12 on September 28, 2011.

The program was supported by legislative action in 2012. Subsidy for school bus refurbishment was established under Title 20-A MRSA §15689, Sub-§12 in accordance with the provisions of Public Law 2011, Chapter 655, Part F.

This program is collaboration between the **Maine Department of Education** and the **Maine Military Authority**

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### 1. APPLICATION

The application process opened November 11, 2011 and will remain open as long as funds are available.

To be considered for the School Bus Refurbishment Program districts first complete an application. A link to the application is listed on the Maine Department of Education School Bus Refurbishment Program website (listed below).

Program eligibility:

- Public school districts
- Buses with current Maine vehicle inspection sticker
- Bus meets mid-life condition joint visual inspection
- Program application is accurate, complete and timely

A typical profile of a bus that is a good candidate for the refurbishment program is:

- Age: 7-10 years (half-life)
- Engine: 7 years more life
- Rust: high level
- Structure: sound

As of August 14, 2012, the state received 117 applications to begin the school bus refurbishment program.



A refurbished school bus at the Maine Military Authority production facility in Limestone, Maine.

### 3. APPROVAL

To determine if a bus is approved or declined for the refurbishment program, the school district is required to first submit an application and then the bus must pass the field joint visual inspection (F-JVI) which is conducted by the Maine Military Authority (MMA). Following the application and qualification inspection, the refurbishment approvals are based on the order that the signed con-

tract for service is received by the state.

In the interest of tracking the life cycle of buses which have completed the refurbishment program; districts which are approved for state refurbishment subsidy agree to track their future bus maintenance using the state provided transportation maintenance software.

The School Bus Refurbish-

ment Program and the new School Bus Purchase Program are separate state programs. The approval decision for one program does not impact the approval decision on the other program. Districts can apply for and have the potential to receive approval for both programs each year.

Estimating by vehicle age, 27% (FY10/11 data) of the Maine public school transportation fleet are potential candidates for mid-life refurbishment.

### 5. SUBSIDY

State subsidy for school bus refurbishment is received the year **following** the contract for services.

The minimum subsidy is 30% of the base school bus refurbishment price.

Minimum subsidy example:

$$\$30,000 \times .30 = \$9,000$$

If the subsidy for a district is less than 30% then the district would receive the minimum subsidy of 30%.

The maximum subsidy is 70% of the base school bus refurbishment price.

Maximum subsidy example:

$$\$30,000 \times .70 = \$21,000$$

If the subsidy for a district is more than 70% then the district would receive the maximum subsidy of 70%.

The subsidy computation specific to each school district is listed on the Maine Department of Education School Bus Refurbishment Program website (listed below).



School buses going through refurbishment at the Maine Military Authority Limestone facility.

## 2. QUALIFICATION INSPECTION

To determine if a bus is a viable candidate for the school bus refurbishment program, a master mechanic is sent to the school district to conduct a field joint visual inspection (F-JVI) of the bus.

The Maine Military Authority contacts the school district to schedule the inspection after the school completes an online program application.

The master mechanic and

the school district work together to complete an inspection work order. This inspection work order and F-JVI is conducted at no cost to the school district. The inspection is conducted before the district decides whether to contract the refurbishment service.

At the conclusion of the field inspection, the Maine Military Authority master mechanic determines if the bus is quali-

fied to be a candidate for the School Bus Refurbishment Program. This “half-life” status insures that your bus will be restored to “like new” condition.

When a bus is qualified for the program then the application is forwarded to the Maine Department of Education. The bus is then approved for the program as funds are available annually.



The first refurbished school bus completed at the Maine Military Authority facility. A bus with “half-life” status was restored to “like new” condition!

## 4. CONTRACT

Once a bus has passed the application, inspection and approval steps then the school district superintendent initiates a contract with the Maine Military Authority to complete the school bus refurbishment.

The summary of work performed includes but is not limited to:

- Perform a receiving joint

visual inspection (R-JVI) and an inventory of each bus, at the production facility, with the customer prior to acceptance

- Separate the body and frame when practical to begin body work
- Repair or replace various undercarriage parts as necessary

- Prepare, prime and paint complete frame and undercarriage
- Prepare, prime and paint complete body exterior
- Apply anti-corrosion (rust inhibitor) protective undercarriage coating

School districts may elect to have additional work performed if they wish to pay for

the additional services. The price for the school bus refurbishment basic contract is \$30,000.

All work performed will comply with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), Maine Department of Education Uniform School Bus Standards for Pupil Transportation and the Maine State Police school bus inspection requirements.

## 6. WARRANTY

Each refurbished bus receives a quality assurance warranty. All buses receive a thorough final inspection including a 10 mile road test. All parts and materials used will meet or exceed OEM specifications. Maine Military Authority will warrant repairs performed under the Scope of Work for one year on paint

and workmanship quality.

Maine Military Authority is an ISO 9001:2008 facility. That means they follow specific requirements for a quality management system. ISO (International Standard Organization) facilities, like MMA, adhere to formal international standards, technical specifications, technical re-

ports, handbooks and quality management practices.

The Maine Military Authority brings 15 years’ experience in refurbishing vehicles, a national reputation for excellence and the longest warranty available to the School Bus Refurbishment Program.



Col. Hugh Tim Corbett, Executive Director of the MMA describes the frame separation process to Stephen Bowen, Commissioner of Education, during his tour of the MMA production facility.

# SCHOOL BUS REFURBISHMENT PROGRAM



## PROGRAM GOALS

1. Supplement school bus maintenance by refurbishing mid-life school buses
2. Extend the safe and useful life of school buses

## MAINE DOE STRATEGIC PLAN

The School Bus Refurbishment Program supports core priority area #5, coordinated and effective state support of the Maine Department of Education strategic plan. Subsidy for bus refurbishment is a resource that helps schools manage decreasing school budgets and improve operational productivity and safety.

## PROGRAM TEAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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School Bus Refurbishment Program

Application, Approval & Subsidy • Contact: Pat Hinckley • [pat.hinckley@maine.gov](mailto:pat.hinckley@maine.gov) • 207-624-6600



ISO 9001:2008

School Bus Refurbishment Program

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